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# Integrity

marriage and virginity



EDITORIAL	1
FROM OUR READERS	1
RESPONSIBILITY IN CATHOLIC MARRIAGE	3
<i>Mr. and Mrs. X</i>	
CHASTITY IN MARRIAGE AND VIRGINITY	10
<i>anonymous</i>	
A SON BEING BORN (A POEM)	27
<i>A. P. Campbell</i>	
CONSECRATED VIRGINITY: TWO INTERPRETATIONS	29
<i>a nun / Father Peter Canon</i>	
EDUCATING CHILDREN FOR MARRIAGE AND VIRGINITY	36
<i>Elaine Malley</i>	
MARTHA AND MARY (A POEM)	42
<i>Edwina Bowe</i>	
BOOK REVIEWS	43

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# editorial

Virginity has an extremely important connection with marital chastity. Where virginity is not prized the wife and the mother are not respected. That is why any movement that would seek to enhance the place of Christian marriage at the expense of virginity would be self-defeating.

*Integrity* has had a good number of issues on marriage; although in them we have covered many aspects of the subject we have never before discussed the relationship between marriage and virginity. As lay Catholics we have reaffirmed to such an extent the possibilities of sanctification in marriage that perhaps our readers may wonder in what the essential superiority of virginity consists. If marriage and virginity are both ways to heaven is personal taste the only way of distinguishing between them? What are the services they perform for each other in the Church? Is there a requisite knowledge or training that is necessary for those who would seek to find their vocation in either one?

The problem of marital chastity becomes ever more difficult not only on account of the conditions in modern civilization that our writers graphically describe, but ironically enough because of medical advances. For instance, a woman who in a less advanced century would have died with her first baby is kept alive, but medical warnings of the danger of future pregnancies force the sincere Catholic couple to make the difficult choice of practicing abstinence or endangering the wife's life. Likewise reduction of infant mortality leaves parents to face the prospect of raising and educating (usually) all the children they bring into the world. "Having children for heaven" is no longer as simple as it was for our ancestors many of whose children died soon after they reached the baptismal font. An annual pregnancy usually means now a baby every year to care for, support and raise to adulthood. Under such circumstances the economic strain on the couple, the effort and work involved can be almost unbearable. But if Catholic couples seek to limit or space their offspring, the strain on their chastity is severe. What then is the answer?

These are a few of the notions this issue attempts to explore.

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## from our readers

To the Editor:

I suppose I should write directly to each of the writers of the August number of *Integrity*, since theirs were the words which helped me. But I must ration my words. . . .

To the prisoner solitude is a highly-prized, almost tangible commodity distinguished by its absence. Surrounded and surveyed, for us

real solitude is a myth and privacy a fading memory. Yet we are most of us singularly alone in this welter of single-minded egos. A faceless mass, our most over-used word is the vertical pronoun. It would seem that if solitude, as opposed to loneliness, has worth, then prisoners should come close to realizing its value. Unfortunately, most of us simply do not know how to use it.

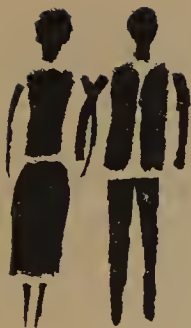
As a group we probably represent some of the more obvious evils inherent in the disuse or abuse of contemplation. We also, I think, typify the resourcelessness of A. P. Campbell's social animals when surface activity palls and the individual suddenly and unexpectedly confronts the inner—not silent but certainly unheeded—self. And yet, ironically enough, we have little opportunity to develop a solid core of inner resourcefulness during our enforced stays. Our warders, in addition to assuring themselves of our continued presence for the correct legal interval, are principally concerned (if one is to believe their pronouncements) with building up in us acceptable social patterns, with developing a desire to adjust to the group, with, in short, creating a desire and a recognition of the benefits of conformity. That some form of "adjustment" is needed is obvious. One simply questions the practicability of that currently espoused by most penologists, and that in the face of the average prisoner's history. This history, it might be added parenthetically, is notable for its lack of solid moral grounding—and no real attempt is made to correct that lack.

What seems needed, by prisoners and keepers equally, is a reorientation, a reassessment of inner values; the values which not only determine how a man adjusts to a group, but (what is probably more important) the group to which he will adjust.

Under the pressures of a long prison sentence the hope of early release and fear of early return (as a consequence of maladjustment), a man who values his individuality however faulty it may be, may succumb to the surface rituals of programs intended to train him in the more obvious, more rewarding (and most hypocritical) guises of interpersonal relationships (with a Dale Carnegieish overstressing of upper-case success). Under such an onslaught a soul so weak as to have become what with only the greatest charity can be called a recanted Catholic could well be expected to quit what shaky illusions of ethics and morality may still support it and give over to the Philistines. Pride in having remained consistent in its pursuit of sincerity—of a kind of honesty—could well have been shattered leaving an awesome vacuum. To such a soul, one who has not prayed for nearly a decade, an issue such as the August *Integrity* might be the buttress unwittingly yearned for. For such a person it would be virtually impossible to express adequately what your magazine has done.

*name withheld*





Mr. and Mrs. X.

## responsibility in catholic marriage

*A couple who have six children  
give their view of the responsible use of sex in marriage.*

Our times abound in formulas for success in various fields of human activity. The labor-saving, corner-cutting fever is best indicated in the hunger for quick solutions to the more profound and fundamental of life's problems. With Norman Vincent Peale's plastic-enclosed "mustard seeds" as spiritual good-luck charms on the one hand, we find on the other—even within the Church—formulas for "success" in Catholic marriage in the whole-hearted endorsement of large families, without proper attention to the enormous complexities of large-scale family life in this society of ours. But just as there is no single formula for the spiritual life which compresses that life-long task into a simple routine, so it is with marriage and family life in its many aspects. It is our thesis that a Christian marriage survives and flourishes, not by any neat plan worked out in advance nor by reaching a certain statistical goal in child-bearing, but by a lengthy process of adjustment, suffering, and dependence upon the grace of God with a full awareness of the great responsibilities that parenthood and family life impose. Even an apostolic young married couple who have been thoroughly "Pre-Canaed," betrothed, and wed will still be faced with problems for which they have no immediate solution, and which will require years of sacrifice and

suffering to work out. Their problems, though seldom new, will be unique to them, and experience alone will be the way they will find their answers.

With these things in mind we would like in this article to state a few reflections based upon our own experience of fourteen years of married life. We have discovered no new "principles," no key to success. We have met and solved our problems as they arose, in context, as it were. Many still await solution. We seldom knew which was the correct principle or guidance to apply at the critical moment. We have tried, erred, and tried again. What growth and progress we have made in the spiritual life and in the preparation of our children for heaven, we attribute not to any grand plan for Catholic marriage, but to having received the grace to meet and surmount difficulties as they arose. We publish these reflections, not as a pattern for others to follow, but as a statement of experience for others to observe and profit from—in that narrow sphere where example teaches.

Our comments will be chiefly on the problem of family size as it relates to the use of Rhythm and continence in marriage. (We have no problem with the teachings of Holy Mother Church on birth control.) The most striking aspect of the problem of Rhythm and continence, to us, is the almost total neglect of the environment in which it must be carried out.

### **our sensate culture**

We live in a sensate culture in which the sex element is hardly absent from the illustration or interpretation of the most ordinary human action. We also live in a mobile, industrial and commercial civilization in which few men enjoy the dignity of a profession or a lay vocation which is fully satisfying; and in which the work of woman in the home has become sterile, lonely, and devoid of traditional meaning. Probably the normal state of 20th Century urban man is a condition of psychological frustration in his work and sexual stimulation by his entire environment. Many young Catholics are preserved from the tremendous impact of the sensate life about them until after they marry and "know" each other. When the marriage is fulfilled their eyes are opened to temptations about them from which they were spared by the chastity of their premarital life.

This then is the setting in which most Catholic married couples must work out the solution to their problems—an environment hardly conducive to sexual inactivity in or out of marriage. It would be ridiculous to assume that Catholic married couples trying to be prudent in the exercise of conjugal love by the practice of Rhythm or continence are not affected by these influences of the environment about them. The net result of these pressures, together with the romantic tradition of marriage to which we are all heirs, is to make the sexual element in marriage play a more dominant role than it might play in other cultures or civilizations. And its voluntary regulation is therefore more difficult.

### **medical and material problems**

Now the question of family size normally arises among Catholic married couples for economic and medical reasons. Sometime between the fourth and eighth childbirth the prudent couple will ask themselves: how many children? The problems of feeding, clothing, and housing the family and finding adequate help for the mother become more and more serious as the family grows beyond six in number, unless the father's income has grown in proportion to his family size. In our own experience the obstetricians for two of our six children have imposed an absolute ban on marital relations for periods up to one year after childbirth. But aside from medical requirements, the economic problem remains the chief factor in making couples ask themselves just how many more children they can have. The tension between one's spiritual and material obligations to existing children, and the teachings of the Church on the limitation of future children, becomes very real; for, as Catholics, we have little choice as to the means we may use. To add irony to this dilemma we seldom find spokesmen for the Church or parish organizations who really understand or who would take steps to assist the large family in managing its many problems. Rather they will extol the very large family by awards of distinction to "mothers of the year" who have outdone themselves bearing children.

We have come to wonder if perhaps one might well gain heaven through marriage by *not* having more children than is prudent, given the setting and circumstances of particular marriages. Might it not be possible to rear well a moderate-sized family giving the children the environment and assistance of a kind that may well

be precluded by a very large family? Would this be presuming on the providence of God more than say, bearing children to the exhaustion of mother, provider, leisure, culture and charity in the very large family? If the Church in America needs lay leadership of a caliber which could assume its rightful role in all the professions, might parents be allowed to assist children in reaching these goals without the neglect of others in a large brood? It would seem to us that some parents who overburden themselves with generating large families run the risk of surrendering their role as educators and counselors of the children to schools and social agencies.

We have observed some young couples—zealous products of lay apostolic movements—themselves heirs to fine middle-class traditions, become burdens and problems to the very movement which originally inspired their marriage and early family life, by slipping into a kind of “apostolic non-support” of their large families as if somehow the Church or society owed them a living in exchange for the large number of children they have had. We have further observed that children of these marriages sometimes reject the entire religious tradition their parents labored so hard to inculcate while placing them behind their peers educationally and socially. These are not small matters to children.

### **the responsibility to educate**

To our mind it all centers about the term *responsibility*. A Christian marriage, in addition to its own spiritual and emotional fulfillment, must also be responsible. It bears responsibility to its children and to the community around it. It bears a responsibility to the station in life in which the parents find themselves by virtue of their background, profession, and aspirations. How else, for example, can a Catholic child, unless he be the rare child of genius, have a childhood which, by its breadth and range of experience, by the thoroughness of its educational preparation, will equip him to reach the top in the lay professions in which articulate Catholic spokesmen are so rare today? We can write amusingly of children being “cheaper by the dozen” only when a substantial income makes it possible, or in an agricultural community having the economic frontier of the city or more land at its door. It would seem logical to inquire whether parents of some very large families are equipped in a Catholic sense to “educate their children for heaven,” or are



being responsible to themselves, to the community and to the Church by having an extremely large brood.

We are not arguing here for a hardened ambition by socially-conscious Catholic parents—zealous to send the children to the “best schools” and to associate with the “best people” for the sake of “getting ahead.” We are arguing for a sense of responsibility on the part of intelligent, spiritually-formed Catholic parents toward the future their children can have, if they grow into the fullness of the traditions which their Church can give them, and thus become a haven for the transformation of the social order itself.

### **marital asceticism**

If we are granted this point that family size need not be the maximum to be acceptable in the eyes of God and the Church, the crucial question becomes: how can it be controlled, and the marriage or the salvation of the couple itself not sacrificed in the process? We have no suggestions to make as to whether Rhythm or continence is superior as means. We do feel that either way a “marital asceticism” is required on the part of husband and wife—a task perhaps more difficult to carry out than that of the religious celibate. Either Rhythm or continence requires a mutual understanding of husband and wife—a consent and surrender to the will of God through the denial or periodic use of conjugal love. A purity of intention, a depth of understanding, (and in the case of Rhythm a full consent to bear the consequences) must be acquired to make the sacrifice possible. As Gustave Thibon states in *What God Has Joined Together*: “Such a sacrifice must be a true one, a frank and honest immolation, without subterfuge or rancour or dubious compensations. In other words it must be a sacrifice and not a repression. A true sacrifice, which immolates instinct, also sublimates and transfigures it; a repression, on the other hand, transfers and burlesques it, turns it into something sly and shameful. . . . True sacrifice nourishes the soul; repression poisons it.”

To this statement of the problem we would add a few practical suggestions. Life in the modern four-room apartment or undersized home produces an extraordinary amount of physical contact between husband and wife. There are no cloisters to make the practice of Rhythm or continence easy for the average married couple. It should be noted in passing that neither spiritual direction nor advice

in the confessional is usually helpful or consistent on this score. This again is a problem which must be worked out by the individual couple by prayer and sacrifice. The mutual surrender, consent and sacrifice which are required for the proper fulfillment of conjugal love are presupposed and necessary to our minds for the suspension of conjugal love. Certainly if we ask for the grace to use continence or Rhythm properly in marriage it will not be denied us. What would be a help in this matter would be a literature of "marital asceticism" in the same way that we now have a spiritual literature of conjugal love.

It would be presumptuous for us to make assertions about the relative virtues of Rhythm or continence. They are both difficult for us, each in its own way. The greatest natural support during the periods of sacrifice is the friendship and mutual understanding of husband and wife, a bond which is built up during the years in which the family is being established and growing up. The husband's role is perhaps more difficult during the periods of sacrifice, particularly if his work in the world lacks the satisfactions which are normally the man's—of planning, building, and pursuing goals to their end.

We have observed instances where young couples with very large families have sacrificed the husbands' professional calling before they could establish themselves because of the sheer economic pressure of supporting their families adequately. How many more scholars, doctors, lawyers or statesmen among Catholic young people might there be if such couples had thoughtfully and prudently planned a family of the size they could adequately handle early in their career? \* It seems that these questions should not be a matter of indifference to the Church. Certainly it should bear upon the plans of young Catholic married couples who have a sense of responsibility to themselves and toward their children.

In this area we find it most difficult to be understood correctly. We are most grateful to God for the children we now have and we would like more and will not neglect the additional ones, should they come in the future. What we find extremely difficult is the almost hallowed tradition of the large family—as if one could not be a "member in good standing" in certain circles and have less

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\*Or, it might be suggested, delayed courtship and marriage until their education was completed and they themselves established in their profession.

than the maximum number of children. We have come to feel that a re-thinking of Catholic marriage in terms of its social, spiritual, and economic responsibilities should be made—and with the same honesty and rigor with which any similar problem might be approached. We have no sympathy with strictly “bourgeois” ambition as it relates to the limitation of family size, among Catholic or non-Catholic couples.

Responsible Catholic marriages, we feel, require as thorough a spiritual preparation for unselfish understanding on the part of both husband and wife as the preparation of the novice for his vocation in the religious life. It seems to us that the privileges granted a couple through the sacrament of matrimony require a discipline and “asceticism,” if you will, as great as those of the person in the religious life. And in the particular setting of marriage and lay professions in the modern world, this becomes a difficult task to which there are no simple solutions.

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anonymous

## chastity in marriage and virginity

*An article that explores the implications of chastity  
for those who are married,  
single, or dedicated to God in virginity.*

The new emphasis on holiness for lay people and on the spirituality of marriage has not been without its pitfalls. They have ranged from the naive, too literal claim of the newly-married Christians that their "two souls have become one," (a claim that must inevitably meet with disillusionment) to the implication, condemned by the Holy Father in the encyclical, *Sacra Virginitas*, that marriage alone can fulfill the human personality and is consequently superior to virginity. Of course, one would hesitate to say that the latter inference is widely made in this country; one is only too aware that marriage is still too often held up to teen-agers by over-eager recruiters of religious vocations as something only for those who lack generosity and are willing to remain mediocre Christians.

But a certain fundamental understanding of both vocations is necessary for the young person who is to choose wisely either one. The religious who fails to appreciate the good of marriage must necessarily fail to appreciate the dignity of his own vocation; and the married couple will have an incomplete understanding of their own union as the symbol of the union of Christ and His Church,



unless they understand that the virgin in her person is truly the "bride of Christ" on behalf of the whole Church. Because of this interrelation of marriage and virginity it is not surprising that an excellent book on one subject should be an aid to understanding the other. *Chastity*, the fifth book published in the Religious Sisters' series,\* while it is intended for women religious, has great relevance for married people. This article does not pretend to be a conventional review of the book, but a collection of random thoughts inspired by its contents. If it is a test of a good book to impel the reader to go off on fruitful, exploratory tangents, *Chastity* certainly has proved its worth.

### the new notion of chastity

The book (by various authors) starts with a history of the development of religious chastity in the Old and New Testaments, and a discussion of the position of women in ancient civilization to which Christianity introduced the radically new idea of perpetual virginity.

We can easily forget in our shock at some Old Testament conduct that the sexual morality of the Jews was still much higher than the pagans around them. Sister Jeanne d'Arc, O.P., in an illuminating chapter, "Chastity in the Bible," shows how the Old Dispensation was a gradual preparation for the ideal of absolute virginity in the New. She sees Mary's resolve upon virginity not as a sharp break with the whole of the Old Testament (which was lived out under the sign of fecundity rather than virginity) but as an achievement, a culmination of all that had gone before. "She was on the crest of a wave—but it was a wave that bore her up. She was the first to reach the summit, in the order of giving; but others before her and around her had climbed the lower slopes. This was certainly something entirely new—this perfectly transparent dedication to God of soul and body" nevertheless ". . . Mary summed up and surpassed, in her own unconditional offering, this whole ascending progress of the Jewish soul."

The Christian Gospel besides making explicit the vocation to virginity was a perfection and completion of the Old Dispensation in regard to marriage—not only the act of adultery forbidden, but

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\*Newman, Maryland, \$4.00. All quotations are from this book unless otherwise noted.

even the looking at a woman to lust after her; not only the indissolubility of marriage between one man and one woman reaffirmed, but even the taking away of any loophole for divorce formerly allowed on account of hardness of heart. This view of marriage, raised to the dignity of a sacrament, was as foreign to the pagan world to which the Apostles preached it, as the way of virginity, of absolute and perpetual abstinence from sexual pleasure, which Christianity introduced.

### **marriage for pleasure?**

In reading this book the thought naturally proposes itself that in today's world the ideal of virginity is fast becoming as foreign as it was at the beginning of the Christian era. It is easy to overlook the fact that the ideal of marital chastity is likewise becoming obsolete. One notices in the thinking of many Catholics today the unconscious acceptance of the purpose of marriage as exclusively one of pleasure; so that too often the only difference between the Christian's and the modern pagan's view of marriage seem to be that the former accepts the fruit of his pleasure, the latter does not. Nevertheless the equation of the marital act to pleasure predominates in each. The realization that the Christian view of intercourse is radically different is lost sight of. One hears Catholics excuse the conduct of a man, when his mortally-ill wife becomes pregnant, with, "Well, he's got to have his pleasure."

Forgotten is the notion that for the Christian the use of marriage is regulated not by instinct but by right reason illumined by the Holy Spirit through the graces of the sacrament. The marital act is a vehicle of grace, not the uncontrolled impulsion of irrational pleasure. "Chaste married people," as Father Hernand, O.P., remarks in the volume under discussion, "possess an interior control of their sexuality enabling them, possibly not without difficulty but at least with success, to fulfill the demands of the natural law. This is not the place to consider in detail the chaste use of sex in the married state. I emphasize merely how essential for married people is interior integrity. Without it, or if it exists only in an inchoate state, their sexual life may perhaps for a time be conformed to the demands of right reason; when for instance there is no temptation to commit adultery, or, as more frequently happens, no need to space out the family, or even to cease having children altogether. When

such temptations or needs arise then fairly frequent falls will show clearly that the previous integrity of their acts possessed merely the appearance of virtue."

It seems safe to say that too often American Catholics in their idea of marriage have fallen prey not only to the prevalent Freudian exaltation of sexual pleasure, but also to the naturalistic reaction to the previously dominating tone of Irish Jansenism. In books, articles, Cana Conferences, there has been great stress on the goodness of sex, the beauty of the marriage act, the legitimacy of surrendering to its pleasures. Perhaps there has been insufficient reminder that the Christian living in the sacrament of matrimony still bears in his body the effects of original sin. Certainly he should rejoice in the pleasure of marriage (a footnote in this book reminds us that far from belittling sexual pleasure, St. Thomas maintained that before the Fall such pleasure would have been even more intense) but he must realize that he is not in the state of innocence. It is easy for him to make sexual pleasure an end in itself, to be carried away by his passions, or to "be led astray into a sexual life at variance with the requirements of its biological and human purposes or, if it is not so at variance, to be attached in brutish fashion to pleasures of this kind."

### **human beings are responsible**

"In brutish fashion." An animal's sexuality is out of his control. A man's is not. The marriage act is a human act, an act a man is responsible for. Sometimes this fact is forgotten. In marriage the couple receive the right to each other's bodies, the right to the use of sex. But whether or not to exercise that right at a particular time or in particular circumstances is a rational decision from which they cannot escape.

The expression "accepting all the children God sends" has been criticized for implying, whether overtly or not, that the conception of children is exclusively dependent on God, and that there is no human act or human decision involved. On the contrary, today's Christian cannot escape responsibility for his use of marriage. His is not the ignorance of the primitives who see no connection between intercourse and the birth of children. While certainly it is laudable for parents to accept the children their intercourse has brought into being, they cannot evade the responsibility for the intercourse in the

first place. This is sometimes forgotten by certain authors in articles and in talks when they counsel couples who are burdened by a serious medical problem (such as very real chance of the death of the wife if pregnancy occurs) "to go ahead and trust in Providence." Certainly if conception has taken place they must trust in Providence for the outcome, but they have to assume responsibility for the decision "to go ahead" in the first place. It seems surprising that some authors in such cases never seem to consider the possibility of continence\*—let alone the possible obligation to practice it.

How different is their attitude from that of the Pope, who in his address to Italian midwives, when he is dealing with the problem of difficult medical cases in which Rhythm is inadvisable because of its uncertainty, sees the practice of total continence as the only solution. The Holy Father continues: "But it will be objected that such abstinence is impossible, that such heroism cannot be attained." But he says, "It is wronging men and women of our times to deem them incapable of continuous heroism. Today, for many reasons—perhaps with the goad of hard necessity or even sometimes in the service of injustice—heroism is exercised to a degree and to an extent which would have been thought impossible in days gone by. Why, then, should this heroism stop at the borders established by the passions and inclinations of nature?"

The other arguable alternative (for the Catholic) to the practice of continence—that the couple should go ahead and have intercourse regardless of consequences—not only is evading responsibility for the wife's life and putting the burden of heroism on her, but is evading parental responsibility for the already existing children. Perhaps going ahead and having another baby would be more difficult (though in all honesty let us admit that in such cases continence is rejected usually, not because the couple have a great desire for another child, but because continence is too difficult). However, it is only immature religious romanticism which holds that the degree of difficulty determines the virtuous choice between two courses of action.

One wonders if those who are afraid to counsel continence (either periodic or complete) lest the man be driven to another woman consider the fact that the man has a grave obligation in charity for his wife's life and welfare. For, the Christian spouse is

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\*Of course the *objective* possibility of continence is meant. In particular cases certain subjective considerations might argue otherwise.



called upon not to view his wife as a mere object of pleasure (this was the pagan view Christianity overthrew) but as another human being, his equal in dignity, to be cherished, protected and nourished by him, as (St. Paul says) he cherishes, protects and nourishes his own body. In loving his wife he loves himself; can he therefore jeopardize her life for passing pleasure? Their love has had its physical expression, indeed; but isn't that love strong enough and deep enough to uphold them even when its physical manifestation becomes impossible? Furthermore, their marriage is a symbol of the love of Christ for His Church; the husband is called upon to love his wife as Christ loved His Church "when He gave Himself up on its behalf." The parallel of sacrifice for love's sake is too obvious to need further elaboration.

It may be argued that difficult cases, where the need for total abstention is warranted, are exceptional, and that the ordinary couple have no need to practice continence to refrain from having children. Granted, and granted too that some couples practice periodic continence or Rhythm without sufficient reason, out of selfishness and to escape the sacrifice having children entails. This abuse has been stressed frequently in *Integrity*. (See particularly Father Klueg's article in *Integrity's* Birth reprint which condemns severely the unjustified use of Rhythm.) But our enthusiastic encouragement of parenthood and the blessing of large families (in the Nuptial Blessing the priest prays that the bride will be fruitful in children—without specifying how many!) need not make us overlook the place of self-control in the total Christian view of marriage.\*

### **continence in marriage**

The St. Andrew's missal reminds us that "In the ages when faith was at its strongest, the Church exhorted married couples to practice continence throughout the whole period of this 'solemn fast' (Lent)."

This no more implied a low estimation of the value of sex any more than the modern Friday abstinence implies a low opinion of

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\*The Church has never held as a norm that a married couple must have as many children as are biologically possible. As Father Joseph Bucklev, S.M., writes in *Christian Design for Sex* (Fides): "The absolute ideal would seem to be that parents have as many children as they can reasonably afford a decent opportunity to get to heaven. Children are born to earth only that they may, one day, people heaven."

the value of steak. Food, drink, sex—all good; but all capable of being abused, and consequently all objects of mortification that they may be used aright and given the correct value they bear in God's sight. That continence is no longer a part of the liturgical fast does not lessen its value or modern man's need for it.

But getting back to the book—"Married people may well possess sanctifying grace and infused chastity and from their marriage sacrament they may have the actual graces they need, but, if they have only a rudimentary acquired chastity is it not to be feared that, for most of them, the whole organism of infused virtues will be paralyzed?"

Marriage, to fulfill its function of being not only a vehicle for the transmission of physical life, but a way to the fullness of spiritual life (or in other words, Christian perfection) for the couple themselves, requires that the sexual passions be brought under control. Father Hernand in this book on *Chastity* says even that "the basic problem for married people in quest of perfection is the sexual one." And here the need for mortification, for mutual self-denial, suggests itself that in marriage the person may cultivate the virtue of chastity. "... a chaste man is free in relation to his sexuality. Chastity provides him with an independence and an autonomy which operates in favor of his freedom of choice; he is now delivered from the internal domination of an instinct formerly untamed but now civilized and ready to meet the thousand and one unforeseen and ever different situations of life."

Having ten or a dozen children may or may not be a sign of virtue. (Though the unselfish care and generous hardworking support the parent gives to these children is certainly a sign of virtue!) But in marriage external results are not an infallible sign of virtuous action, or of the temperate use of sex.

The Book of Tobias bears good witness to conjugal morality: "But thou when thou shalt take her—for three days keep thyself continent from her, and give thyself to nothing else but to prayers with her. And when the third night is past, thou shalt take the virgin with the fear of the Lord, moved rather for love of children than for lust. . . ."

"This atmosphere of prayer and purity surrounding the marriage bed implies a very exalted idea of marriage and an unusual sense of married chastity." And this in a narration from the Old Testament; what then should be expected of the children of the

New, when marriage has been exalted to the image of the union of the divine and the human effected by the Incarnation?

It is rather unfortunate that even the licit use of Rhythm (for good reasons) is not usually presented under the aspect of the search for perfection. The couple can be helped by their confessor to see the time of denial as a time of purity and prayer, of mortification and preparation, so that the time of intercourse can become an expression of mutual love at its highest, and of the charity they bear to each other and to God.

In passing it might be well to note that the natural difficulty of practicing self-control in marriage is aggravated in the case of those who suffer from emotional disturbances and a sense of personal inadequacy. The man who is successful in no other area of his life, or who has no other satisfaction, finds in sex his only source of pleasure. The woman who has had a loveless past, is emotionally immature, and is as a consequence insecure in her husband's love, may have an exaggerated need for its physical manifestation. These are factors that are too often overlooked in assessing the possibility of continence in marriage.

On the other hand, in a successful Christian marriage where the couple have many common vital interests, where together they give their attention to rearing well the children they have brought into the world, and where both of them realize as the years go on that the "deeper, wider life they have in common" goes beyond the sexual life they share, the possibilities of continence—should the good of their family require it—are enhanced.

### **Christian perfection in marriage and virginity**

Repeatedly throughout this book there is emphasis that married people as well as those who have consecrated their virginity to God are called to perfection. Father Henry, O.P., writes: "Virginity and Christian marriage do not imply different things and both should lead the girl to perfect betrothal with Christ. This is the betrothal which is symbolized, and in a sense effected in the girl's marriage since it is the sacrament of the union of Christ and the Church: and it is this betrothal which appeals to the young girl, called to give her virginity to Christ. The superiority of consecrated virginity lies in the difficulty for the married woman not to share her love, and be guided, surely and solely beyond her marriage union and by

its means, toward union with Christ. The virgin of Christ effects in her heart at the time of her consecration what the Christian wife aspires to through the grace of marriage. . . ."

And Father Hernand remarks, "If virginity is exalted and proclaimed as something superior to marriage, it is not because *per se* the marriage state is more or less sinful. . . ." Quite the contrary; but "The Church, infallibly guided by the Holy Spirit, has always understood virginity as one of the privileged means of reaching the perfection of charity more surely and rapidly."

However, by "virginity" in this context, the authors do not mean the mere fact of being unmarried, or of not having participated in sexual life. Following St. Augustine, they insist that it is the *consecration* of virginity that gives it its value. "In itself virginity is without any special dignity: it is not superior to marriage, quite the contrary, for the love of the married is stable while the virgin's love is ever seeking its object. Consecration fixes the heart in God: no other love could be more sublime than this."

This consecration to God is the special mark of the virtue of virginity. "If we speak of the chastity proper to the celibate state of virgin girls whose intention is not, however, to consecrate their virginity to God, the virtue concerned is not different from that common to married people, widows or bachelors. . . . The same virtue of chastity enables married people to control their sexual relations so that no illicit pleasure enters in and enables unmarried women and widows to abstain completely from all sexual activity. It is probable that the latter have to face difficulties certainly unknown to married people. All the same no specifically distinct virtue is required."

"Consecrated virginity is principally the concern of the soul, of love; renunciation for ever. . . . This commitment is sealed, made irrevocable, by the vow in honor of God. And it is this which distinguishes the consecrated virgin from all those men and women who perpetually preserve their virginity, but for inferior motives. In reality consecrated virginity is as far removed from bachelorhood as it is from marriage. The consecrated virgin is someone apart, we feel, not so much because she renounces human love forever by her vow, but because the vow places her in the kingdom of divine realities."

With the increased emphasis put on secular institutes and dedication of one's virginity to God while remaining in the world, it



is more than ever necessary it seems that there should be a clear understanding of what the vocation to perpetual, dedicated virginity entails. Some of the literature on the vocation to virginity in the world almost gives one the impression that the single woman who is having difficulty finding a mate should "make a virtue of necessity" and take a vow of perpetual chastity. Lacking is the stress that such a vow is indicative of a particular vocation. It would be as disastrous for a single woman to make a vow for a purely negative reason as it is usually for a woman to marry a man for the completely negative reason that there is nobody better around. Even worse. Continuing to live in the world, as she is, a woman who has made such a negative commitment to virginity will experience all the very real drawbacks of a virginal life without being able to achieve that transcendence of her sexual nature, that complete centering of her affectivity in God, that the graces of a genuine vocation make possible.

### **difficulties of virginity**

As Father Paul-Marie de la Croix, O.C.D., writes: "Virginity is usually the preparation of a girl for the right development of the woman that she is to be; therefore virginity brings a perfect balance of body and mind only for a short time. If woman's needs and faculties do not find their fulfillment in marriage and motherhood, this wealth waiting to spend itself in love and service, becomes an idle treasure, a burden which seems every day heavier to carry. Passing years bring out unnoticed traits of character. Frustrated femininity undeveloped by human love easily makes women embittered or introspective. Irritability, a dictatorial manner, independence, narrow-mindedness, lack of adaptability show themselves, as well sometimes as various none too healthy oddities."

This appalling list of disabilities of virginity in itself is quoted not to lower anyone's estimation of the very exalted vocation of virginity dedicated to God, but to emphasize the fact that it cannot be embraced hastily or without adequate preparation. This is especially true of such a dedication to God in the world, where the woman will have none of the supports of convent life, of rule, habit or cloister. It would seem therefore that this life in the world requires not only a great deal of generosity, already acquired mortification, a degree of spiritual maturity that has shown itself in a stable:

cleaving to God, but a balance "psychological as well as spiritual." "That balance," Father Paul-Marie de la Croix says, "is the proof of the reality of a true vocation rather than any intensity of feeling or emotional piety, as these may often hide unresolved sublimations and complexes." (Perhaps it should be noted here once again that the writers in the book under discussion are concerned with virginity as it is lived out in a convent; nonetheless, it is possible without distortion to apply their thinking to virginity dedicated to God in lay life.)

Not only the difficulties of religious life, but the difficulties of a dedicated life in the world, are increased when there is no adequate formation given to the young girl to prepare her for the realization—which will deepen as she grows older—of all that she has sacrificed in giving up marriage and motherhood. A Prioress-General writes a perceptive chapter on "Instruction and Formation in Chastity." She writes, "Woman by definition is dependent, receptive and self-giving, a being of good will, at the disposal of others; at the same time she needs support. These characteristics must not be forgotten. There must be no desire to make her like man; she is essentially different. . . . Her psychology is in accord with her physiology. Physiologically woman is made for her function as wife and mother. . . . Her whole organism is ordered to the propagation of life. Woman is specialized in this role. Organically and mentally her life is centered round the cyclic modifications of the ovary. *Tota mulier in utero* said the ancients. In the same sense Father Neilly said, 'All womankind is a cradle.'

### **triple renunciation**

"But in the case of a virgin consecrated to God, the cradle remains empty. She avoids the natural and normal destiny of woman, and this cannot be done without a certain danger. Care must be taken and some effort made to preserve nervous and mental balance which might be imperiled when the state of life or the person's own will are in conflict with the fulfillment of natural functions. Forewarned a woman is more easily able to be cautious, realizing that quality of life is more valuable than life itself, she can consecrate to Our Lord this balance which has been bought so dearly and preserved with such difficulty."

Especially if she is to live a life of virginity given to God in

the world, she must realize what is entailed in her triple renunciation (of the pleasure of sexual union, of the human love and emotional well-being that having a husband brings, of the joy and fulfillment of having children). As several writers point out in the concluding section of this book on *Chastity* which deals with psychological aspects of the subject, there is a normal human development of the person from infancy. (First, with all his or her emotions and desires centered in self, next with the interest of the infant in the outside world developing as he comes to realize that his mother is not just what-feeds-him but is someone who loves him and whom he can love, through childhood when his interest is in the same sex, through adolescence when he is likely to develop a "crush" on an older person whom he admires, with the natural culmination of attraction to the opposite sex and consequent marriage.) When virginity is chosen, the final step in this development is transcended. Unless then the virgin is guided to live her life on its highest level—to strive to realize fully all that her vocation as "bride of Christ" entails—there is danger that she will revert to a former stage of development, and seek compensation for the very things which she has freely relinquished.

In the convent such emotional compensations would make themselves manifested in different ways from what would occur in the world. Instead of developing a "crush" on the mother superior, the woman who has chosen to remain single in the world for God's sake, when she fails to live on the level to which she is called, can seek compensation for her lonely heart in an overdependence on her parents (if they are still living), in a search for crumbs of affection from her women friends (with resulting sensitivity if they should slight her, and a propensity for imagining such slights,) or in busying herself with a hundred and one works of charity and so-called apostolic activity which she takes on as an escape (consciously or not) from the very life she has chosen.

Finally, when the heart is not centered in God alone but is yearning to return to a former stage of affective development, the virgin can tend to bend over backwards in preserving her chastity. Instead of concentrating on expanding her love for God, she can let her interest be narrowed and engage in a perpetual warfare over the things she has sacrificed. She becomes excessively prudish, sees in every baby an occasion of sin, and in every man a personal affront to her chastity.

### the glory of virginity

All the emptiness, all the solitude that virginity implies has as its sole purpose the glorious fact that God can become for the soul its only support, its only source of strength. Rooted in faith, hope and charity the virgin's life is a constant testimony to the reality of God. For it is only the love of God that gives virginity meaning. The very real sacrifice of human love would be nonsensical unless the person is prepared for a full and total surrender to the love of God. "Virginity is authentic and flourishes only in the service of love."

As Father Le Guillou writes: "Virginity implies the consecration of the whole being to God; it is a particularly vigorous and impressive expression of what charity itself is, the pledge of the whole man before the wholeness of God: 'Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with thy *whole* heart and with thy *whole* soul and with thy *whole* mind.'"

When a virginal life is lived at its highest level—a level where in spite of human frailty, human inconstancy, the soul at its deepest point cleaves to God—there should be an increasing sense of freedom, an expansion of the heart, an openness to Love. The union of God and the soul necessarily brings a deepening of the person's love for human beings. "The practice of virginity does not destroy the refined human love of men for men, rather it deepens it: in a mysterious way virginity takes unto itself what had been sacrificed; in fact it consecrates this transfiguration of the body by the spirit, this profoundly human harmony, enabling a man to give himself spontaneously with all the disinterestedness of true liberty: the virgin being surrenders himself, at the deepest point, by his reference to God; he has at his disposition to love with infinite love, and one thinks of the wonderful phrase of the Cure d'Ars, 'the heart of the saints is molten'."

### virginity's contribution to marriage

There has been discussion in *Integrity* and various other magazines concerning the contribution that dedicated single women in the world can make to family life. This is usually evaluated in terms of direct service to individual families, as well as efforts toward the changing of those economic and social conditions that



make family life difficult. Overlooked perhaps has been dedicated virginity's first contribution to marriage: that is, the very fact of perpetual virginity argues for the possibility of chastity in all walks of life. It isn't far-fetched to think that one of the possible designs of Providence in the encouragement that has been given to dedicated virginity in lay life at this time is the support it will give to married people in an era when a chaste married life has become extremely difficult. The virgin's purity helps to uphold the whole structure of marriage; her heroism in transcending the desires of the flesh is at the same time a reaffirmation of the dignity of those married couples who bear well the burdens their holy use of sex has laid upon them, as well as an encouragement to those couples who, for some reason or another, must practice a self-control in marriage that they find extremely trying. For the dedication of the virgin is not for selfish spiritual advantage; her prayer, her sufferings, her mortifications, are for the benefit of the whole Mystical Body.

The apostolic influence of a life of dedicated virginity, its very real (though not always apparent) fruit for human society in general, should not hide the primary function of the virgin (whether she's a member of an "active" community, an enclosed convent, a secular institute, whether her life appears tremendously active or almost exclusively one of prayer) and that is, to contemplate God for the whole Church. In humility and awe—not counting on her own merits but on her incorporation into Christ—she becomes on behalf of all humanity a being of praise, a witness to the Absolute, a bride of the transcendent God.

### **"reluctant" virginity**

But what of those single women in the world who do not feel themselves called to a life of perpetual virginity, who would still like very much to marry if the right opportunity presents himself? Does what has been said above—about the difficulties of virginity as well as its fruitful witness—have any relevance to them? We think so. For one thing, it becomes increasingly more evident in the contemporary situation that the Catholic single woman cannot preserve her chastity if it is only going to remain a negative virtue.\*

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\*Or preserve it in a condition of psychological balance. It should be remarked that often even when external chastity is preserved it is at the cost of the distortions later on discussed.

The single woman may have trouble getting a proposal, but she has no difficulty getting a proposition. Furthermore the days when social pressure kept her virtuous are pretty much over. The secretary of a conservative business concern can have an affair with her boss quite openly without losing her respectability. That is why Léon Bloy's castigation of the bourgeois woman on account of her negative virtue (in opposition to his portrayal of the saint and the prostitute both of whom he felt were capable of making a positive response to reality) is definitely dated. For increasingly is it true that the "good" girl remains good not through narrow convention, nor because she has no opportunity to be bad, but because she fights to preserve her chastity in a society which pays her no special tribute for so doing. With her dedicated sister in the convent or in the world, the "reluctant" virgin can bear witness to the reality of God, to the existence of a life beyond this temporal one when all her sacrifices will be rewarded, when all her unused faculties that seem in this world to be frustrated will somehow reach a spiritual fruition.

And meantime she can strive for that spiritual fruition here on this earth. For not only for the woman called to consecrated virginity, but for the woman who must "perforce remain unmarried," the possibilities of spiritual motherhood exist. She must be wary lest she claim the fruits of spiritual motherhood too easily by trying to live vicariously the life of her married sister or friend, by wrongly seeking emotional compensation in smothering with love a favored nephew, or making herself a gloating martyr for her unfortunate friends and associates. But if her life is not going to deteriorate into a perpetual binge of self-pity or into the harrowing misuse of other people to compensate her for the lack of husband and child, she needs to keep her eyes on the goal that she shares with the consecrated virgin as well as with the married woman: Christian perfection, perfect love of God. Not desiring to revert to a former stage in her emotional development, and feeling keenly her incompleteness without a husband to make her whole, to take her truly out of herself in the ecstasy of marital union, she nonetheless can, if she perseveres in beseeching prayer and dependent trust on God's grace, count on the Holy Spirit to effect that transcendence of human love which naturally is impossible to her.

That there will be struggles that are endless, that her loneliness can be humanly unbearable, that her body rises up in humiliating rebellion, does not change the fact of her great destiny or of God's

love for her. That she has not the psychological satisfaction of being the "bride of Christ" as does the nun, does not negate the goodness of her life lived out moment by moment in doing the will of God as she sees it. Frankly accepting her nature, not rejecting her femininity by desiring to be either a man or an angel, she can grow in graceful womanliness. With more opportunity for prayer, and more freedom to attend daily Mass, Retreats and Days of Recollection than her married sister, she can find in her apparent "vocationless" state (whether it is temporary or permanent) gradual fulfillment of the real vocation of all Christians: sanctity.

### **training in chastity**

"Experience shows that the absence of acquired chastity is exceedingly prejudicial for most people."

One thing it seems that is safe to conclude from this discussion of chastity in all states of life is that circumstances in today's world being what they are—and the effects of original sin being what they are—training in chastity is imperative and indispensable in the upbringing of children. And that, irrespective of what vocation in life they will finally choose.

The difficulties people face in combating temptations against chastity in later life are due in no small measure to the fact that they never learned self-control. They have only a rudimentary acquired chastity. "Is not this the tragedy of so many young boys and girls when they come to marry? Their sexuality is hardly under control, or is repressed, which comes to the same thing, since its repression removes it from the possibility of enlightenment by reason, and there can then be no question of asceticism, and so, of the acquisition of chastity."

Very rightly—considering the ignorance in which their parents, or, anyway, their grandparents were kept—the younger generation are given adequate information. The necessity of good sex instruction is emphasized. But shouldn't it be faced that information while it is good is not going to insure chastity?

It would seem that normally there are two other "assists" that parents can give their children to help them toward a healthy, holy sexual life. The one is an atmosphere of love, an environment where they experience the give-and-take of being loved and of loving. An excessive need for the pleasures of sex in adult life is

often in no small measure due to immature emotional development, to the stunted affectivity of people who have had so little love in their lives that they cling to every crumb.

The other help parents can give in this matter is the careful training of children in self-control. The child who learns to eat the carrots as well as the chocolate cake, to clear his toys away even though he doesn't feel like it, can be tending toward a "mortification of the senses" years before he can possibly know what those words mean. Small mortifications are, with prayer and frequent reception of the sacraments, part of the child's preparation for a chaste adult life. Through them he learns to put his body at the service of his soul.

Father Francois de Sainte-Marie, O.C.D., in a chapter on "Mortification of the Senses" gives a balanced presentation of the relationship of soul and body, and the part of the latter in bringing the person to God. ". . . if the body, open to the powers of evil and inhabited by them, is the worst enemy of the soul, it is at the same time her best ally, for it is in the body and by it that the soul sanctifies itself and acquires a glory which can already be seen to shine in the body."

Discussing the purpose of mortification in bringing the Christian to union with God, he writes: "Though it is death to everything merely human, real asceticism contains no element of suicide; on the contrary it develops what is human to a point beyond all reasonable expectation."

And "real asceticism" is within the reach of anyone desiring to be holy; of any Christian in every walk of life who desires that the activity of his senses should be completely dominated by that of his soul. Father Francois de Sainte-Marie gives a list of "little, intelligent generous efforts to struggle against slackness and sensuality" while remarking that such mortifications are infinite in number, because infinitely small. "Thus there are many small matters in connection with meals (which no one but Our Lord can see) drink in little sips when one is thirsty, not avoid portions of food unpleasing, taking little of a favorite dish or not taking a second helping, 'forgetting' to take sugar or wine, not adding salt, etc. Sometimes there is a bitter medicine to be taken, and so many other trifles. More generally there is laziness to be shaken off, and love of ease and comfort, compelling oneself to get up at once at the fixed time, not putting things off till tomorrow, accepting the



fatigue of household duties, not being rough with inanimate objects, finishing the task undertaken before starting another . . . bearing having to stand the cold or intemperate weather without grumbling and so on."

All, that we may learn to use our bodies and all our faculties as God wills them. All mortifications to be inspired by love, that whatever our state in life, whatever our vocation, in chastity we may aspire to the fullness of love.

For the aim of the Christian whatever his vocation—whether he uses sex chastely in marriage, or abstains from it completely in virginity—is union with God Who is Love.

It is charity—love—which is the root of his purity. It is with love that he battles to preserve his chastity. "The chaste man," says St. John Climacus, "is he who repulses love by love, and who puts out fire of the body with the fire of love."

The virgin who turns her back on human love and goes directly to meet her Lord, and the married woman who rejoices in chaste nuptial love are both made for the eternal possession of Love. Their whole life is tending toward it; it is God they seek, and union with Him forever. "Love seeks that which it has, not that it may have it, but that it may have it always."

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A. P. Campbell

### **A Son Being Born**

Here  
Love  
Now  
Is made perfect  
And durable:  
Dipped  
In the tempering tide  
Of pain  
Sluicing through  
Heart, loin and limb.  
Here  
Heart of man  
Is enharbored,  
Umbilical cord and anchor  
Fixing  
The far-wandered soul of him.

Blessed now  
 With sacramental suffering  
 Love is deep-pillared  
 On pain:  
 I, husband  
 Here,  
 Unworthy to stand in the flame  
 Am vicar  
 In Lyla's red labor:  
 Stung through  
 With sword-of-ice  
 World sin weight,  
 Savoring nature's deep anguish  
 Of Adam blame.

O,  
 Love now  
 Can flourish,  
 Cauterized of private privilege,  
 Feeding on  
 Refined fuel,  
 Part-of-both-of-us stranger,  
 Pushing-pilgrim,  
 Newborn  
 Abel-old offering,  
 Grace-hungry viator  
 For baptism-waters wailing  
 Calling  
 On the Son of Man;

For love now  
 Will busy with plan:  
 Moulding,  
 Graceless  
 And grumbling  
 This bit of new flesh  
 Into mystical  
 Sweet-charity-smooth  
 Body  
 Of out-of-body-born  
 Christ,  
 God  
 Become man.



two interpretations

## consecrated virginity

*A priest and a nun seek to share their insights  
into the meaning of consecrated virginity  
in the Church.*

*The comments of the nun—a Discalced Carmelite  
—require careful reading since they are written  
in a vocabulary that may be new to our readers.*

*The priest is Father Peter Canon, a parish priest  
who wrote previously for our Divorce and  
Parish issues.*

### **A DISCALCED CARMELITE NUN**

Christ Wisdom: *I am the Life.*

Paul: *I live, now not I, but Christ . . .*

Augustine: *We must understand our Person, the Person of our Church, the Person of the Body of Christ.*

Wisdom to Teresa: *Seek yourself in Me.*

The Person of Christ is the Wisdom of God. This gracious, luminous Utterance of all the perfectness He is—this is our prototype. More even than that—this is our Center and Circumference, our own new Personality by Whom we are penetrated and vivified, while remaining ourselves.

We must understand our Person. In the simplicity of God, realities fuse and blend like flames, rays, colors, producing a profusion of splendors without confusion of substances. Without apology

or qualification Jesus declares, *Whoever does the will of My Father in heaven, he is My brother and sister and mother.* Cut and dried distinctions of earth dissolve in the realm of the supernatural, while blent things, still distinct, acquire divine purity of precision in their significance. So again it is to the men who have been with Him from the beginning that Jesus applies the metaphor of the woman in labor—and this image Paul, the most virile of men, will adopt as his own. The Church, the whole of us, stands forth in the heavens of the Apocalypse as a radiant woman in the pain of new lifebearing. And the Divine Person of this Church, this Christ, has revealed Herself as the Woman of supreme loveliness—as She through Whom all things are brought forth—as the Mother, even, of the Love uniting without dimension and consummating without measure.

It is this Person Who wills to live in us, to possess us and shine through us—through us to reach from end to end mightily and order all things sweetly in Her world. This is not only the Beginning from Whom we have our being, but the End in Whom our being is fulfilled. All things are to be restored in Christ; in Wisdom we must seek the proper form of things, including ourselves. Faithful listening to the Church will reveal to us this form; self-surrender, called obedience, will identify us with it . . . in varying degrees.

### **ecstasy**

According to Saint John of the Cross, obedience has another name, a strong, direct word that has much to say to us. Unemotional, literal, stripped of false and unhealthy associations, this word is *ecstasy*: the name, Saint Thomas tells us, of an effect of all true love. The obedient Christian goes forth progressively from himself into Another—empties himself that he may be filled, possessed of Another. Let us trace the pattern of which this is part.

In the beginning was Shared Ecstasy, white fire of total Consummation—Person one with Person in perfect Love. Shared Ecstasy IS and all creation burns in It.

Power and Beauty and Love—Life and Wisdom and Love—Dominant and Surrendered and Love.

In this Image man is created, divided into separate, integral entities capable, in measure, of mutual completion, procreation of new life, and consummation in God. Promptly he destroys his in-



tegrity and foregoes his consummation. Who is to heal him? *By Wisdom they were healed, whosoever have pleased Thee, O Lord, from the beginning.*

She through Whom the Father generates all that is abandons not Her own. *Hearken unto Me, O house of Jacob, all the remnant of the house of Israel, who are . . . borne up by My womb. Even to your old age I am the same, and to your grey hairs I will carry you. I have made and I will bear: I will carry and will save.* In the fullness of time the eternal Self-emptying, Ecstasy, takes mortal fashion and Christ is. Now forever Christ is and all things must be renewed. The pattern stands. The renewal will take place in Christ, in shared ecstasy, the exchange of lives, lovers' mutual indwelling (expression of Saint Thomas). Hence the bittersweet putting off of self and putting on of Christ.

A new, definite revelation of the Triune God is made. A new commandment—love of one another according to the Christian pattern—is proclaimed. A new life—the human wholly possessed and transformed by the Divine—is paid for and presented as a gift.

#### **a new vocation**

And as a most direct and perfect means of coming to live this life, fulfill this commandment, and continue this revelation in the world, a new vocation is introduced. It is consecrated virginity.

One's obedience to this new vocation surrenders to God, to Christ, a fundament of human life. We must remember in what Image we are made. The Divine Family in Unity said, *Let Us make man to Our image and likeness. . . . And God created man to His own image: to the image of God He created him: masculine and feminine. . . .* The called and obedient soul may well, at the first, know a sense of brokenness, of incompleteness. The more intense the pain, the greater the obedient laying down of life, and so the more meritorious of that *Reward exceeding great* Who is Substantial Consummation.

It may be that a shared sacrifice is required. In some hour two who love, gone past all minor barriers and liberated from all that is not love, will face across one absolute division. They are not one. In anguish they will know that there is no human answer, and that still some answer must redeem the human best from mockery. It must be sought and found—and its voice will be heard

within each soul, calling within, to the Center of all, to the Love without dimension, to the living Unity of God Who is given to us. They will come to know their Answer, at a price.

It is the Whole Christ to Whom the called and obedient surrenders, and Who is received.

Consecrated virginity bears witness that we are one in Christ—that our Person is the Surrendered held fast in the Consummating Embrace of the Father—that our restored Integrity and Consummation are Divine, are Someone, are the Holy Spirit.

#### FATHER PETER CANON

Even if virgins must understand themselves as human beings, as Christians they must always tend to understand their virginity from the viewpoint of God. Virginity as a human state or achievement or destiny never will offer the key to the understanding of the virginity of the Mother of God. Of course virginity must also be understood from a human point of view: as renunciation or fulfillment—denial for God or gift to God—and thus as a form of full maturity of human nature, destined for service in love; and be it considered as denial or gift, as service it can carry the accent as well on its charitable potentialities to one's neighbor as on the exaltation of the exclusive right of God. But this outlook on virginity—its relation to human nature—is not the problem the existence of which we want to indicate in this article.

The Church's teaching on grace and the supernatural order, especially during the last few centuries, insists on the definition that "supernatural" is what exceeds the needs and aspirations of nature. If therefore we speak about Christian virginity as a *supernatural* reality, we must seek for that aspect of virginity which exceeds the loftiest promise of human fulfillment, without forgetting that as a human condition it could be the result of many and contradictory unconscious aspirations and conscious motives.

Only such consideration of virginity will be theological in the strict sense—that is, take as the starting point of inquiry God's viewpoint as it is contained in revelation known by faith—and not the

analysis of human reactions to a state chosen in the service of God.

In studying a subject which touches the realm of the sexual at its center, we must realize that psychological reactions rooted in personal background will color the statements even of the deepest mystic according to his human experience, and thus make it impossible for some to find the objective meaning of virginity in the account of this other person's reactions to it. An objective theological understanding of this state is so much more important as it is very difficult anyway to realize the meaning of virginity. Christ Himself said that only those to whom it is given will grasp it, and so it is highly important that what is understood of the Christian meaning of virginity be at least that which seems most important to God.

### "sacred" virginity

An understanding of the meaning God gives to virginity will best be found by analyzing the context in which the Church speaks about it, that is as "sacred" virginity. And since God first spoke in Hebrew an examination of the original meaning of the word "sacred" in Hebrew will reveal that the concept underlying it has found its fulfillment in Christian virginity. All that was "sacred" in the Old Testament was so because it was a foreshadowing and a symbol of the "sacredness" of the Messiah and thence of the Virgin Mothers: Mary and the Church.

A "normal" Hebrew word consists essentially of three consonants which are written and therefore visually transmitted to posterity, and some vowels which are not written but learned and transmitted only in oral tradition, and which give to the root—which has a general meaning—the precision of a clear concept. Thus the same root can assume many, sometimes conflicting, meanings. So *jzy* which has the general meaning of "sanction" can mean either recompense or punishment.

Not so the root *kds*. Invariably it has the general meaning of something separated, something cut off. From earliest times it is used exclusively of God's *otherness*, of His infinite "not-worldliness"—which seems to be the profoundest and most comprehensive thing a creature can say about Him and therefore the best designation of His Being. Opposed to it is the *profane*. Whatever creature God sets apart from the world as His exclusive property is swallowed up

in His own "non-worldliness," and therefore *kds*—sacred . . . subtracted from the use of men for their purposes and therefore "forbidden" to them. Thus it is with the land around the burning bush onto which Moses is not to step, and with the innermost chamber of the temple into which nobody is to penetrate but the High Priest who is himself "sacred" for that purpose, or with the ark, which kills those who do not themselves belong to the world of the "sacred" if they approach it. Israel is sacred because it is the people God has set apart for Himself, and may not mix with other people who are not thus set apart by Him.

### the choice of God

It is very important to notice that to be *kds*, that is sacred, in the Old Testament is not the outcome of human action or virtue or goodness, but almost independent of these the consequences of the "choice" of God—the exercise of His supreme freedom in which He neither has to give reasons for His action nor mete out his gifts according to the worthiness of creatures. Sacredness and moral holiness do not necessarily coincide. Once "sacred" a creature is taken from the profane context and is God's . . . and remains God's despite moral lack of holiness. This is true of Adam or David after their sins not less than of Israel, the "sacred people," after her adultery with other gods.

Sacredness in this sense in the Old Testament therefore is a state effected by God's intervention and not merely a consecration attempted by man and even less a mere state of moral rectitude. If sacredness for God is the unutterable "otherness" of His Being, for a creature it means the transferral from the profane into intimacy with "the Light of Israel which shall be as a fire and the Holy One thereof as a flame," consuming what is not of its own nature.

That "sacredness" is God's exclusive accomplishment independent of man's consent appears from the fact that He alone in a Hebrew sentence is the subject of the verb corresponding to sacred. He alone sanctifies. Re-translating from the Indogermanic Greek back to the semitic original in which it was spoken, it is He whom we ask to hallow, *kds*, His name in the *Our Father*.

Thus we find that in the Old Testament there are several words used to designate a man who does the will of God—walks in His face—does justice—leads a good life—or does not offend God, while



the root *kds* is reserved to a different sacredness which is proper to man and other realities such as the temple or the people, a sacredness which is not dependent on the decision of man's free will.

If we study the history of any of the great men to whom God entrusted a sacred mission in the Old Testament we find that they all were called in the likeness of Abraham into an obedience which reached down into the flesh: either they received a command from God like Moses and Aaron and Saul, who found the oil running down his beard before he realized he was to be the new king, or their genealogy marked them out to be the carriers of a sacred mission. Redemption was dawning but the Emmanuel (God with us) was not yet in the world. Supernatural reality was foreshadowed by visible symbols, but the symbol was not yet able to make supernatural reality present.

### **the gift of freedom**

And when the Word was made flesh "not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man but of God," God sent an angel to the Virgin. In Nazareth a human being was asked to enter God's intimacy—to belong to God—to the point that from her flesh His body be formed. She first of all men was asked to make of her will itself a gift to God so that in His infinite respect for human freedom, He might make the gift of her freedom sacred. God's claim to the sacredness of human nature—His right to assume creatures into His infinite otherness—until now anticipated in hope and therefore realized in procreation, entered the present and became an object of faith and the human practice of virginity.

In the apologetic, psychological, moral and ascetical discussion of Christian virginity, the necessity of insisting on the practice of virginity—such as, its possibility, the methods of its realization and conservation, its use in personal advancement in prayer and moral holiness, its advantage in the apostolate and the problems of its institutionalization—it is very often obscured that Christian virginity first of all and above all is *sacred* virginity, that is the apparition of God's sacredness—*kds*—in human flesh. The Christian virgin is a human person who has consented to God's action separating him from the world, disconnecting him from its profane context, and constituting him in the midst of a profane world, as a symbol of God's intimacy, as a sacrament of God's unworldliness.

Elaine Malley

# educating children for marriage and virginity

*Mrs. Malley, who has written frequently for Integrity on marriage and family life, contributes a perspicacious article that outlines parents' obligations to their children as far more than the imparting of sex information.*

David Grey is fourteen years old, and an altar boy. His mother tells me that he wants to be a priest when he grows up. His father and mother are both daily communicants and active parish workers. They are good, hardworking people, gentle and kindly, devoted to God, their church, their family, and their community. One day, as she and I were sewing pads for the cancer hospital, Mrs. Grey said, "Isn't it terrible, the things they print in the papers?" I agreed with her. It is.

She went on: "I was working in the kitchen last night and David was in the next room. He called out 'Ma, what does "abortion" mean?' Imagine! A word like that in the mouth of an innocent boy! I can hardly bring *myself* to say it!"

"Where did he get it?"

"It was right in the headlines of the paper. 'Doctor suspended from hospital staff for abortion'."

"What did you tell him?"

"Well, I hardly knew what to say. I had to think quickly. I finally told him it was practicing without a license."

"But that's not true!"

"I couldn't tell him the truth. It's too horrible. He doesn't know about those things."

"Does he know about murder?"

"Oh, yes."

"You could have told him it's the murder of little babies. That's true."

"I know, but I was so upset at the time I couldn't think what to say. I just said the first thing that came into my head, to pass it off."

"Doesn't he know anything about the facts of life?"

"His father is going to tell him about it in a nice way as soon as he gets a little older."

"Hasn't he ever asked any questions?"

"Oh, sometimes. You know how children pick things up in school from bad kids. We've always passed it off and told him not to listen to anything like that. Thank God, he's very obedient, so we've been able to keep his mind pure. Have you finished all your pads? Go to Mrs. Casey, she'll give you some more material."

There wasn't anything I could say. The Greys' older children are all grown up. Three are happily married. One is a priest. David is the baby. Somehow, I think he will make out all right.

I suppose there are still many conservative families like the Greys. But the progressive ones also manage to make some spectacular blunders. I remember one conscientious young mother who years ago attended with me a Parent-Teacher's meeting at which a psychiatrist advocated early sex education for children. She came to my house the following week, and, with a quaver of shaken audacity in her voice, announced *that she had done it!* She had four children, ranging from eight to three years of age.

"I sat them all down in front of me, looked them straight in the eyes, and, without batting an eyelash, told them the whole thing." She told me that she felt terrible afterwards. The children didn't ask any questions, just looked uncomfortable and *punished*, and she felt that she had soiled them and herself for life. "But I only did it because I thought it was right. And it took all my courage. Why do I feel so horrible?"

The same anxiety about sex conditioned the actions of both of these mothers. One was afraid of the results of knowledge about sex, and the other was afraid of the effects of ignorance about it. Mrs. Grey's over-protective zeal drove her, in an unforeseen situation calling for immediate action, to lie to her son. The young mother, under stress of a sudden conviction that she had not been fulfilling her duty to her children, forced herself to do violence to her own

modest reticence, and approach subjectively and abruptly something that should be studied objectively, in accordance with a child's spontaneous growing interest, and in proportion to his capacity to assimilate information.

### **facts, habits and attitudes**

As long as parents act in good faith and charity, God in His mercy will overlook any unwitting mistakes. He may even mitigate the consequences of these mistakes by allowing a teacher or a relative with a greater knowledge of child psychology to supplant the omissions of parents or set right any disturbances created by their blunders, before any great harm is done.

The importance of equipping a child early with the facts concerning the physical origin of life is largely recognized today. It is also realized that these facts must be given little by little in answer to questions that the child may ask at various stages of development. But there is more to education than the imparting of information. There is the formation of good habits. And there is the cultivation of correct attitudes.

Facts can be conveyed by word of mouth or by the presentation of books and articles. Good habits can be formed by the establishment of wholesome routine activities and by discipline and patience. But mental attitudes pervade so minutely every phase of living and working and playing that they spread like a contagion without the necessity for their being expressed.

The wrong attitude toward the nature of virginity and the function of sex can make any attempt to convey information about purity and the processes of procreation more harmful than the old cautious reticence. It would not matter so much if these subjects were going to touch a child's life only obliquely, like mathematics and a knowledge of Greek. There will come a time in his life, however, when he will have to exercise all the powers of his judgment to make a personal decision on which will depend, not only his temporal future, but his eternal salvation. Again, it would not be so important for him to acquire a sound preparation for either of these vocations if the mores of the world in which he will live could be depended on to protect him against his own fallacies. But he is going to have to face a secular world's contempt for virginity and a pagan world's worship of the sex act, whether licit or illicit.



The mere knowledge of the physical facts about sex and the moral precepts of the Church with regard to its use and absention will be poor armor without an intellectual insight into its place in God's plan for redemption, an emotional discipline that makes him love only that which has effectual value in God's sight, and a will trained to resist that which is invalid.

The main source of an incorrect and inefficient attitude toward virtue in sex is a negative attitude toward virtue in general. In this light godliness is regarded as a state of vacuity, restricted and immobile. The good person is conceived, not as a saint, but as the statue of a saint. To be good, one must become a frozen effigy of oneself. The statement so frequently made to children: "You're good when you're asleep," is an unconscious expression of the false outlook. When a parent says, "If I could only keep my child as pure and innocent as he is now," and takes steps to block the child's normal approach to a knowledge of reality, he is retarding the child's progress in virtue as much as he is protecting him from evil.

The everlasting "don't" is another expression of the negative attitude. To live is to want to spend oneself, to have one's faculties vitally engaged. A child whose moral outlook is made up of "don'ts" cannot help feeling that virtue is equivalent to the stagnation of a living death. It is easy to see how this outlook can create the following ridiculous attitude toward marriage and virginity: being married is more bearable than being single, because in marriage one has a chance to do something, at least with one person, without being wicked; but being a virgin is holier than being married, if one can stand it, because virgins don't do anything. This is, of course, an oversimplification of the negative mental attitude, but there are many Catholic adults whose outlook does not go much further.

Facts, wisely administered, in an atmosphere where true values are sought and false values are rejected, cannot of themselves be a threat to innocence. Even though parents may become convinced of this, there is still another source of knowledge which parents fear, and that is the knowledge that comes of experience. Parents are right to be on the alert to shield their children from experiences that may prove too great a challenge to their untested powers. But there is also a danger in over-protection.

Everything that a child learns he wants to make his own, and this can only be done through experience. A child's play is a good

way of putting into practice the things he learns. One little girl, after she learned where babies come from, began hiding her doll under her dress against her abdomen until it was time for the doll to be "born." But there comes a time when play no longer satisfies the instinct to realize one's knowledge. Fortunately, this comes at an age when a child is wise enough to be able to understand that there are certain experiences one must wait for. In an artificial atmosphere this waiting can become almost intolerable. Where all experience is vicarious, through movies, television, radio, and books, sexual experience begins to loom in a youngster's mind as the only reality. Those whose time and energies can be absorbed by other realities—the reality of physical accomplishment through work; the reality of intellectual activity through study; the reality of esthetic experience through music and the arts; and the reality of love through genuine friendship—find the waiting much easier. Experience in boy-and-girl relationships through group dating can also be beneficial at this time, if they are not allowed to become obsessions.

In all of these things youngsters should be given a certain amount of freedom to make certain decisions and profit from their own mistakes. A girl who has never been allowed to have a date in her own home is very apt to let all barriers down once she is out on her own. Many children cannot wait for the age of freedom. If they are not allowed to engage in activities that interest them in their own homes, they will resort to doing so surreptitiously, and the confidence between parent and child is severed.

Education for life begins in the cradle. Everything that goes on around the child, everything that happens to him, teaches him something of the nature of the world to which he must adapt himself. It lies in the parents' power to open his vision to a world far wider than that limited by purely natural experience, encompassed by life and death. They do this not so much by talking about God, as by living in His grace and making their home as much as possible a reflection of His heaven, through mutual love and respect.

### **ignorance, innocence and virginity**

Much is said about the duty of children to respect their parents. There is also a respect due to children, a consideration of their littleness, their ignorance, and their innocence. But the transitory mode

of existence of these qualities in the child should be recognized.

There are three terms that are frequently confused: ignorance, innocence, and virginity. All three are present in little children, but they are far from synonymous. Ignorance is a state of the mind; innocence is a state of the soul; virginity is a state of the body.

Knowledge makes innocence vulnerable. That is why parents are fearful about the knowledge their children acquire. And yet, without the knowledge of good and evil the passive innocence of childhood could never reach the heights attained by the mature innocent who for the love of God has chosen the good and rejected the evil.

The consecrated virginity of an adult is also very different from the dormant virginity of a child. Although virginity is common to children, it is an accident involving no act of volition on their part. Any academic knowledge that a child may acquire concerning sex has no effect on his virginity. The more he knows, as long as he remains innocent, the more power he will have over his choice in the bestowal of his virginity when he grows up.

He may give it to his spouse in wedlock, in which case it will be destroyed. In this act of destruction he will be completely free from any guilt, for it was precisely for this annihilation that it was preserved, as the fruits of the earth are brought to maturity to be destroyed to assuage man's hunger and maintain his own life. It is only by the sacrifice of virginity in an act of loving surrender that new lives, potential saints, can come into the world.

He may elect to offer his virginity to God, in which case it will not be destroyed. For God does not destroy what He has created. God does not need man's co-operation in the act of creation. But as it pleased Him to glorify the humble virginity of Our Blessed Lady by making her the Mother of Christ, it also pleases Him to grant spiritual maternity to those who consecrate every gift He has given them to His immediate and direct service. "For whosoever shall do the will of My Father that is in heaven, he is My brother, and sister, and *mother*."

Innocence can only be safeguarded by the wisdom of love. The dutiful love of God that acknowledges His omnipotence and our dependence on Him is not enough. It is too easy for unconscious resentment to creep into this love. He wants to be loved with a warm, personal devotion, as one loves a dear member of one's family, with a concern to protect Christ's incarnate innocence from

our stupidity and clumsiness. If He is the center of the home in such a way that every member of the family is seen and served as another Christ, every incident that takes place there can become a step in the progress of virtue, and every day an adventure with the Holy Ghost.

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Edwina Bowe

### **Martha and Mary**

Once upon a time  
there were two sisters.  
One was a chord,  
the other a melody . . .

The bronze syncopation of variegated pottery  
was the accent of her heart-beat.  
Her fingers could not stretch an octave  
but were stubby and rough with heat  
of kitchen and labor.

She was the bough that sings in Maytime.  
She was the tempo of Spring-light rain.  
She was the peace in a decrescendo.  
She was the trill in a lark's refrain.

She was touchy at times because she did not think.  
But she combined many tones.  
And she would resolve to work out the measured cadence  
of the day's demand until her bones  
ached with selfless rhythm.

She was the joy conceived in heart-ache.  
She was an a cappella choir.  
She was a psalm in dusk of Vespers.  
She was the vibrant calm of fire.

. . . together they made harmony.



## book reviews

### SEEDS OF THE DESERT

by René Voillaume, Fides, \$4.50

Today, despite the map-spanning of missionaries and heroic priests in city parishes, there are still "nations" to whom the Word is not preached. Some still lie across the seas. Others, geographically right in our midst, are separated from Christ by invisible seas, or sometimes by the very walls of the Church.

To bring Christ to these "separated nations," in His Eucharistic Presence and His fraternal charity—that was the dream of Charles de Foucauld. Lonely among a lonely people, he lived and died in a barren hermitage at Tamanrasset in the Sahara, among the isolated Touaregs.

Now his dream is being realized, gradually, tortuously, by the religious congregation he fathered in spirit after his death.

Father René Voillaume, Prior General and Founder of the Little Brothers, has written in *Seeds of the Desert* a study of de Foucauld and of the vocation of the congregation, officially established in 1936. It is an intimate study, for the book, originally published in French under the title "Au Coeur des Masses," is made up of letters and conferences to the Little Brothers themselves, explaining to them their own early history, growth and religious spirit.

"The fundamental rule of the Little Brothers' religious life," writes Pere Voillaume, "is that they shall do everything in their power to live the evangelical counsels, the perfection of the Gospel life, under the conditions in which others have to lead their merely Christian lives."

This means living as workers among the workers, especially among the poorest and most neglected groups, sharing their jobs, living conditions, food, and most of all their spiritual handicaps. This has led the brothers to take jobs as masons, miners, carpenters, house painters, ditch diggers, factory hands, and many other works of service in many parts of the world. Nevertheless, by keeping at all times their identity as religious, they avoid the difficulties that have overtaken some of the other French worker apostles.

Many will read this book for factual enlightenment on an apostolate still new to Americans, one that must command intense interest in our age, one that may appear strange, even bizarre, to the conservative Church-goer. Many others will read it for spiritual guidance, for in the chapters on Love and Unity, Poverty, Work, Love and Chastity, and Obedience, there is wisdom for all Christians.

Others will be most impressed by another aspect of this important book. Writing from many far-flung places—from Mount Olivet, Dakar, Rome, Lima, Geneva, the hermitage of Mar-Elias near Damascus, an oasis in the northwestern Sahara—Father Voillaume communicates constantly a unique spirit—a Pauline spirit. This apostolic intensity, a burning passion for Christ's Kingdom which so marked the letters of St. Paul, is strikingly evident despite a somewhat awkward translation and Father Voillaume's own understandable tendency to mix expositions of religious ideals with sensible advice and affectionate warnings about the pitfalls of daily community living. *Elizabeth Sheehan*

### **THE MEANING OF LIFE AND MARRIAGE**

by Baron Frederick von Gagern M.D. Newman, \$3.25

This excellent book has a universal appeal. In the first part under the general heading of "life" Dr. von Gagern deals with the destruction of the capacity to love, with the primary importance of a strong and genuine parental love to give the child security and freedom from anxiety, and with laying the foundation of the capacity for love and dynamic faith. The information in the first section is most helpful to all of us as human beings in better understanding ourselves as children of God with all our basic drives and yearnings. It has a special appeal to teachers, spiritual directors, social workers, parents, etc. whose job it is to help direct souls who reflect the problems of our age and who are therefore often lonely and unable to love or be loved. The author discusses these problems in the light of the basic teachings of the Church regarding man's fallen nature, and with his professional knowledge in the field of psychiatry to which he brings the sociological outlook of considering our need for one another and for society. In other words, he considers man as an integrated whole. It is one of the best works of its kind that I have ever read—it is easy reading and although Dr. von Gagern uses some professional language he always clearly explains the meaning of professional terms and nothing is ambiguous. Case histories are used intermittently to illustrate the point he is making and give the book a very human touch.

The second part of this book is given over to "marriage." Here he discusses in a new, fresh, rich way the ever present joys and difficulties every marriage encounters. He says his purpose in discussing marriage is to help the individual to live a happy married life, rich in fulfillment; and secondly to create through such marriages a bulwark protecting the new generation against spiritual need and disintegration and providing for it better opportunity than we enjoyed. His insights into marriage are such that everyone should read this book even if he.

or she has been married for many years. The approach throughout is most positive and yet very direct and frank. *Mary O'Dwyer Flynn*

### POLITICS IN AMERICA

by D. W. Brogan, Harper & Brother, \$5.00

Endeavoring "simply to make the American political system intelligible," a well-known British historian has presented us with an eminently readable, often witty, and remarkably non-critical introduction to political institutions in this country.

Mr. Brogan is obviously impressed by the role and value of our Constitution as the great unifying ideological element in American politics. The operational force, the party system shaped by and shaping the Constitution, and the interplay of the three branches of our government fascinate him. Playing, throughout, upon such phrases from the Preamble to the Constitution as "the People of the United States" and "a more perfect Union," Mr. Brogan outlines the "peculiarly legal," formally conservative, still fluid, and—to his mind—overwhelmingly *successful* "political church outside which there is, in America, no salvation."

He does not want to—and does not—decide whether our form of government, our political beliefs, our solutions to problems are good, better, or best—even for us. For his money, they have worked—especially to keep the country together—and that is no mean feat. Leaving value-judgments to the "moralists," he chooses to describe—flashily, if not brilliantly—the party, machine, convention, campaign, and the executive, legislature, and judiciary—each in its peculiarly American aspects.

Mr. Brogan's zestful approach to the American polity is not arrested by any description, much less profound consideration, of such problems as the claims of personal liberty vis-a-vis those of national security, the relationship of civil and military authority in this atomic age, or the Church-state complex. In organizing his study around the effective machinery of election and government, Mr. Brogan has allowed himself to manifest his truly astounding knowledge of our political equipment and machinations and to collect, in text or in footnotes, just about every American political epigram and anecdote worth repeating and not to bother with the real content, issues, or dilemmas of our political life.

And it cannot be denied that much of Mr. Brogan's passing, urbane comment should give us pause. "The social system that turns over great charity drives to professional organizers on a commission basis, is the social system that turns over politics, local and state, to professionals on

a commission basis. Society is lucky if the mercenaries take St. Paul's advice and are content with their pay." *Elizabeth Sullivan*

### **TOLERANCE AND THE CATHOLIC**

a Symposium, Sheed and Ward, \$3.50

This book of essays deals with the essential problem facing the Church today: existence in a pluralist world, that is, a world in which the Church is but one of many forces of equal power; a world in which religious experience is no longer the motivating factor of most men's lives. The simple black and white proposition of the Church opposed to a "wicked world" does not exist. The issue is rather the subtle and complicated one of maintaining the identity and intensity of Catholicism in a fluctuating society that is continually being shaped and reshaped by forces too large or subtle to be easily identified.

The essays, for the most part, seem to consist of a kind of interior monologue peculiar to Catholics. The writers seem to be preparing their own minds for a more complete attempt later on. There is a good deal of quoting from papal pronouncements and ruminating in Church history for precedents and justifications. This all seems rather remote, for the focus of the issue lies less in theology and philosophy and more in day-to-day functions and psychological attitudes of Catholics. But it may well be that this kind of interior justification is a necessary preparation for the task.

Two essays stand out, one by Father Leonard and the other by Father Congar. Father Leonard gives an excellent background of the Church's dealings with the rise of the issue and is the only essay that seems unafraid of facing things squarely and confidently.

Father Congar holds the crux of whatever philosophical points there are to be dealt with and he gives what amounts to the only reasonable and meaningful attitude to the whole question in his idea of the Church's position in the modern world as a "directive power." The implications and potentialities of this concept of the Church are tremendously important. It indicates the way to a really fruitful working reality. It remains only for Catholics to absorb it into their everyday thinking. This book is a start. *Emil Antonucci*

### **ORIGEN**

by Jean Daniélou, Sheed & Ward, \$4.50

It would be difficult to exaggerate the importance of Origen's position in the intellectual history of the Church. Fr. Daniélou says, "He is of that rare class of men whose genius is equalled only by their sanctity...."



One aspect of Origen's greatness was his effort to separate "pagan" techniques from pagan hopes. Unlike Tertullian, for instance, he distinguished between philosophy and the hopes of philosophers for perfect happiness on earth. Therefore, unlike Tertullian, Origen was free to perform the important task of using philosophy toward understanding the faith. This may be illustrated by Origen's use of philosophy in developing a theology of the spiritual life.

Fr. Daniélou notes that others before Origen "lived the spiritual life to an eminent degree" but had not written a systematic account of their experience. In order to write the first systematic account, Origen used the writings of the Platonists. "The biblical doctrine, that man was created to the image of God, is joined to the Platonist one that man's perfection depends on his likeness to God. . . . Man's real being is his spiritual being, which in a sense partakes of the nature of God. The spiritual life will therefore consist of the process by which he returns to his true nature—his efforts first to realize what he is and then to try and recover his real nature by destroying the power of his corrupt animal life."

This systematic account had a great influence on monasticism. But the problem arises, are the ascetical and contemplative practices Platonic practices justified in the name of the Gospel, or Christian practices described in Platonic terminology? To a nation which understands little of asceticism or contemplation, the question might be rephrased: Are these practices "natural" religious practices, and therefore optional, or "supernatural" and therefore to be integrated into the full Christian life? Fr. Daniélou says, "If his theology of the spiritual life struck a chord in the hearts of so many Christians, the reason is that it was first and foremost a product of the Bible." At the same time, Father shows that the role of the sacraments in the Christian life was under-emphasized by Origen.

These few considerations merely suggest the number of "good things" to be found in the book. The problems dealt with are difficult: to work them out one needs to be a philosopher, theologian, historian and Biblical scholar—and more. Therefore, for those of us who are not all these, it is good to be guided through the problems by Fr. Daniélou.

*Hugh Fallon*

### **MARRIAGE: A MEDICAL AND SACRAMENTAL STUDY**

by Alan Keenan, O.F.M. and John Ryan, M.D., F.R.C.S., Sheed and Ward, \$4.50

Marriage is a subject about which much is being written today. Since it is the sacramental state which provides for the family and home it

has great importance to all. Since the authors have divided the subject into two parts, the spiritual and the medical, there is a unique presentation of the problems that arise and a basis for solutions that rests on a clear understanding of the moral law, and its interpretation by physician and priest alike.

The section of premarital advice—the necessity for it, whose duty it is to explain such matters and some suggestions for dispensing it—is very timely.

The chapter "Conclusions," which is a list of the questions most frequently posed with their answers, will be valuable reading to those who are often confronted with queries of this kind. Although this book is not intended as a first-aid handbook of what to do when problems arise in marriage—the material contained and its method of presentation makes it a valuable reference for all those concerned in direction or counselling, priest and layman alike.

Patricia A. Carter, M.D.

## BOOK NOTES

Those readers who are acquainted with H. F. M. Prescott through her latest novel, *The Man on a Donkey*, will welcome the recent reprint of *The Unhurrying Chase*, a work first published thirty years ago (Macmillan, \$3.50). Again we can delight in Miss Prescott's facile drawing of another time, another place: twelfth century France, her delineation of the subtle changes in a man's character: Yves of Rifaucon, esquire to Count Guilhem of Angouleme, and her skillful telling of the most moving of all adventures: the unhurrying chase of the Hunter of all souls, for the salvation of one soul.

E. M. C.

*The Role of Science in Catholic Education* by Etienne Gilson and *The Teaching of Science in the Catholic Elementary School* by Sister Maria Clare are the two articles in the most recent booklet in the Doubleday series on *Disputed Questions in Education*. Gilson's view is: "To acquire at least an elementary knowledge of the rules of experimental method, especially as it is now practiced in physics and biology, is also to become acquainted with the working of the human intellect at its best and in its application to the order of reality that it is most fitted to know." In practice, Catholic schools seem to follow the general trend of teaching what might be called "the scientific basis of modern industry." The problem needs further discussion. The science curriculum for elementary school has been carefully organized by Sister Maria Clare.

H. F.

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